

# Crossing Borders to Lift the Deprived

## A New Start

Vakarai, a town lying between Trincomalee and Batticaloa, was the last stronghold for the separatist movement in the East of Sri Lanka. Falling back into government control in 2007, the area was razed and decimated by the country's civil war. Infrastructure had been destroyed, human habitations were non-existent and vicious land mines were obstructing any development activities.

But with time, new changes have started taking place. Housing development programs conducted in the area are drawing people back to their former settlements. Schools, hospitals and government agencies are up and functioning again. An appearance of normalcy is returning to what previously seemed a wasteland and the town is slowly recuperating from the crippling war.



## A Helping Hand from Neighbors

Initiated on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2013, the Indian Housing Project is one such program aiding the locale. Collaborating with Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka and three other NGO's, the Indian government is sponsoring the construction of thousands of houses for IDP's in the Eastern province. People who were once considered homeless are now receiving consolation in the form of a simple, proper home. Grants are handed out to underprivileged beneficiaries with the auspices of both the Sri Lankan and Indian governments. Over a thousand houses are

currently being built by Habitat while several are already complete.

**Minister Basil Rajapaksa and HC of India Ashok Kantha at the opening ceremony**

## One of Many

Uthumai Leppah Kalantharumma is one of the recipients of these new homes. A Muslim lady living in the village of Urugamam with her twelve children and husband, life was a struggle for her with added problems intruding in. Her home, a temporary hut built from Cajan leaves and tin sheets was vulnerable to wildlife and natural elements. Feeding fourteen mouths everyday was difficult as well with their meager income. Further complicating the situation was the loss of her home garden which she used for her families nutrition. The invasion of her entire village by roaming wild elephants had destroyed her produce overnight.

**Kalantharumma (second from left) in front of her old home with some of her children and husband**



**Kalantharumma's nearly complete new home**

Thus, when Habitat visited her, she was able to give her children only a plate of rice and one herring. Wild elephants are a regular challenge for the people of Urugamam village, providing an additional reason as to why a secure house (with a proper fence) is vital, hence, the new home she recently received was very much appreciated.

Kalantharumma now has an amazing opportunity to uplift her living standards and is encouraged to build her home-garden once again. Lack of nutrition for her children will

no longer be a problem! They can also sleep safely at night knowing that a sudden gust of wind won't remove the entire thatched roof of their previous hut. Expressing their gratitude for the Indian Housing project, Kalantharumma thanked those involved in providing her family the security of a permanent abode and expressed her desire to see a future where her entire village will continue to develop with similar support.



**Another completed house through the Indian Housing Project**